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# Social-Psychological Needs and “Involuntary” Behavior as Illustrated by Compliance in Interrogation<sup>1</sup>

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Few injunctions are as intensely and universally accepted as that which demands that a soldier should give no aid to an enemy with whom his nation is at war. For the prisoner of war, the most explicit expression of this general norm has been the rigid order to divulge nothing to his captor beyond that minimum international law requires him to give—the celebrated “name, rank, serial number, only.”<sup>2</sup> Adherence to the rule has been held forth as the most specific test of virtue which the prisoner encounters—proving his loyalty, patriotism, morality, courage, manliness, etc., are all made to depend upon “not talking.” (Cf. 29, 34, 46.)

The same set of cultural doctrines which embodies the norm of nonintercourse with the enemy views torture and pain of death as the only excuses for deviations from it. So central and basic to the identity of the prisoner are the values demanding that he resist the enemy that only forces which cause him “to lose control of himself” can be conceived as explaining “collaboration with the enemy” by a person of “sound character.”

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<sup>2</sup> Actually, in the words of the present international convention, “. . . surname, first names and rank, date of birth, and army, personal, or serial number, or failing this, equivalent information” (18, p. 91). This *obligatory* communication under the Geneva Conventions has been set by armed forces of various nations as the *limit* of permissible communication by their own members. Neither the Convention nor usage questions the legitimacy of the captor seeking further information by non-coercive means (18, p. 92; 38).

Nonetheless, virtually all prisoners of war who have been interrogated intensively in recent wars have divulged some information to their captors. Further, the failure of prisoner behavior to accord with the injunction is reported as occurring at least as frequently where interrogators did not employ physical coercion or overt threats of violence or death as in situations where such coercion was employed. (12, p. 76; 13, p. 78; 19, pp. 21–22; 25; 30; 32, p. 212; 33; 37, p. 107; 40; 46.)

That behavior rarely is wholly consistent with injunctions of such apparent normative force raises fundamental questions for social science regarding the role of abstract injunctions in the total web of behavioral determinants in real situations.

The present paper examines some of the social-psychological aspects of interrogation situations which render inoperative in them the normative conceptions of the society—conceptions which the usual prisoner shares at least initially. It will be maintained that prisoners rarely conform to the injunction of silence in interrogation because to do so is inconsistent with more compelling requirements they experience in the actual situation; namely, the maintenance of a viable social role and an esteemed self-image.

The discussion is based primarily on a study of United States Air Force personnel repatriated from captivity in North Korea and Communist China. Some of the context of the practical and policy problems which led to the study will be presented. This context will permit examination of some consequences of the awareness and lack of awareness of social-psychological determinants of behavior—consequences both for the individual who transgresses some cultural injunction and for social policies which attempt to regulate behavior in accordance with social purposes.

#### BACKGROUND

The question of why prisoners yield in interrogation received intensive examination after the Korean War as part of the public and official controversy regarding prisoner-of-war policies. Evaluating the conduct of those who had been prisoners of the Communists in Korea and China, and the nature of the orders and instructions that should be given to military personnel who might risk capture in the future were the major issues. Much of the debate centered on whether or not military personnel should be ordered if captured to restrict their statements in interrogation to the “name, rank, serial number, date of birth” minimum (9, 29, 34, 35, 39, 46).

Those who demanded that personnel be under strict orders to divulge no more than this minimum argued their case primarily in terms of what they regarded as incontrovertible logical and ethical propositions; any talk may aid the enemy and any aid to the enemy is evil. Those who favored more

flexible instructions to personnel argued from what was accepted as an equally incontrovertible fact: almost all prisoners of war in the past had indeed conversed with interrogators, even when under rigid orders to the contrary. (Cf. 46, pp. 17–18.)

The argument that the “name, rank, number, only” rule was unrealistic could be pressed most forcefully, and was, by emphasizing the difficulties of resisting the more dramatic and easily understood effects of violent coercion, or the still more dramatic, although less comprehensible effects of something called “brainwashing” (3, 8, 9).

The Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee (46) which formulated the “Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States”<sup>3</sup> accepted the argument that policy must take into account the real as well as the ideal. It concluded, “. . . it is recognized that the POW may be subjected to an extreme of coercion beyond his ability to resist. If in his battle with the interrogator he is driven from his first line of resistance [i.e., ‘name, rank, serial number and date of birth, only’], he must be trained for resistance in successive positions . . .” (p. 18). The “Code” in this respect departs from the traditional tendency in military affairs to equate the hortatory and predictive functions of language in dealing with human behavior (cf. 16, p. 16).

The present paper attempts to show how aspects of the prisoner’s situation in interrogation may help account for the almost universal inability of even highly-motivated resistant prisoners to adhere to norms demanding non-intercourse. The aspects of interrogation to be discussed, however, are quite different from what is envisioned by the phrase “. . . an extreme of coercion beyond his ability to resist.” Neither those “mental tortures”<sup>4</sup> (35) and alterations of attitudes discussed under the label “brainwashing” (3, 8, 10, 23, 24, 45, 46) nor physical coercion (10) are essential to the kinds of manipulations of prisoner behavior which are discussed here.

The Committee which developed the “Code” modified the traditional rule of non-intercourse with the enemy in interrogation to the extent of applying to it well-established recognitions in the law, and in the culture generally, regarding forces that could compel a person to “act against his will.” In the case of physical coercion, the biological self is viewed as operating with some degree of autonomy from the higher regulatory functions so that the person loses some or all control of his behavior under extreme deprivation or injury. In the case of “mental torture,” the person is viewed as becoming deranged, so that he “cannot tell right from wrong or adhere to the right.” (Cf. 10, 35, 39, 46).

<sup>3</sup> Executive Order No. 10631, 20 *Federal Register* 6057 (1955).

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “mental torture” is used in the stricture in the Geneva Convention against coercive attempts to elicit information from prisoners (18, p. 92).

There is no equivalent recognition in the culture or the law of the kinds of compelling influences which are discussed in the present paper, even though they appear to be of at least equivalent force to the more recognized forms of coercion. The present discussion indicates how the failure of the prisoner to recognize the sources of the compulsion he experiences in the interrogation situation intensifies their effects, particularly the disabling effects of guilt reactions, and how the corresponding lack of recognition of such influences in social policy detracts from its consistency.

#### MAJOR DATA AND ANALYSIS

The primary data for the Air Force study were transcripts of a series of interviews with each of the 220 members of the Air Force who were repatriated by the Chinese Communists in the prisoner exchanges at the close of the Korean War. Each former prisoner of war was interviewed within a few days after his release, and again within a few weeks after his return to the continental United States. These interviews were conducted primarily for intelligence and administrative purposes and had deficiencies as research data. About twenty of these repatriates were also interviewed by members of the research staff explicitly for the purposes of the research, however. In addition, a mail questionnaire, which the repatriates were asked to return anonymously, was completed by 90 per cent of the men. The items of the questionnaire sought primarily expressions of attitude on various problems of captivity and return.

More elaborate data were available from 15 additional Air Force prisoners who were detained in China for two years after the prisoner-of-war exchanges. For these cases, research teams in which the writer participated made detailed observations and interviews of the repatriates beginning within a day of the release of these men and continuing through the first week of their return. This was followed after an interval of several weeks by the assignment of the men to the research center for intensive interviews, tests, and informal conversations with research personnel over a period of from two weeks to one month.<sup>5</sup>

Of the many analyses made of the data developed from these procedures, of special importance to the present paper is an analysis which was completed for 203 cases relating to the military intelligence interrogations which the subject himself had experienced. The interviewers sought a highly detailed chronological narrative of all significant captivity experiences, interrogations being stressed particularly. This made it possible to gain some information

<sup>5</sup> This research procedure is discussed in an editorial, "Good Sense on Captives," *New York Times*, July 28, 1955.

from the majority of transcripts on each "intelligence interrogation situation" the subject had experienced. "Intelligence interrogation situation," for the purpose of this one analysis, was defined to exclude interrogations conducted for such other apparent purposes as the elicitation of "confessions" or propaganda material, for the control of prisoner-of-war compounds, or for political indoctrination.

Each intelligence interrogation situation was "coded" employing a coding schedule which included categorizations of such aspects of the situation as its duration; the amount and nature of the interaction between interrogator and prisoner; characteristics and demeanor of interrogator; duress, rewards and other tactics of influence employed; nature and security significance of statements prisoner reports having made to interrogator; prisoner's reports of his overt behavior and subjective states during the course of the situation; and the prisoner's judgments of the effectiveness of specific tactics of the interrogator and of his own attempts at thwarting the interrogator.

Delimiting interrogation situations from one another and from other captivity experiences involved a complex definition. Essentially, a "situation" was one or a series of encounters with interrogators with no hiatus other than that interpreted by the analysts as serving some purpose of the interrogation, such as rest, "softening-up," forced-writing, etc. As defined, reported situations ranged in length from a few hours to several months, and involved contact with interrogators ranging from a few minutes in the briefest to over 800 hours for the longest. Somewhat over half were of more than 24 hours duration, and about one-tenth lasted a month or more. The total amount of interrogation reported by returnees for the entire period of captivity also varied over a great range. For these cases the median number of situations reported was 5.3. The median amount of face-to-face interaction with interrogators in all situations was about 80 hours for the 165 cases in which a quantitative estimate of this total could be made.

The analysts were two officers with graduate training in psychology and familiarity with both intelligence methods and the background of events involving the prisoners in Korea and China. The analysts achieved almost perfect reliability in applying the definition. They identified descriptions of 1,084 "intelligence interrogation situations" in transcripts of interviews with 203 cases. This constitutes an unknown proportion of the interrogation experiences of these men, but the writer believes that the largest part is included. From his own experiences in interviewing the repatriated prisoners of war, the writer has the impression that the transcripts are probably more deficient in information regarding particularly intensive interrogations and particularly unintensive ones. In the former case, this is true because a few individuals experienced the most intensive interrogation and they encountered so much



of it that they wearied after their return of recounting repetitiously the details of their successive encounters. Unintensive interrogations are probably underrepresented in the data because some repatriates may have regarded these as too insignificant to mention in contrast with other experiences, or simply failed to recall them.

While the discussion of hypotheses regarding the interrogation process in the present paper is based primarily upon this analysis, for interpretations the writer has drawn freely from other data of the Air Force prisoner-of-war study and upon information from a survey he conducted under Air Force contract, of scientific, historical and practical literature relevant to the interrogation process (10). The writer has attempted to discuss aspects of interrogation that are not distinctive to experiences of the Korean War prisoners.

#### RELEVANT RESULTS OF THE AIR FORCE STUDY

Analysis of the reports of Air Force prisoners captured during the Korean War on their experiences in interrogation confirmed the conclusion reached in previous wars regarding the inability of a prisoner to maintain silence in the face of intensive interrogation. All Air Force prisoners of war who were interrogated other than perfunctorily say they conversed with interrogators considerably beyond "name, rank, number, only." (All but two of the 235 repatriated received other than perfunctory interrogation.) Conversing was true of those who had been officially instructed to adhere to the minimum, as well as of those who report receiving instructions that they believed permitted conversation with interrogators under either some or all circumstances, and of those who did not report receiving any official instructions on conduct under enemy interrogation.

Behavior was more frequently inconsistent with the "name, rank, number, only" minimum in situations described as devoid of overt threats or violence than in situations in which such coercion was reported.<sup>6</sup>

Analysis of the captivity experiences of the repatriated prisoners of war developed hypotheses regarding the ability of interrogators to compel a prisoner to answer questions. The inability of prisoners to adhere to the ideal of silence in interrogation, despite their acceptance of norms to the contrary, it

<sup>6</sup> In addition, tactics of interrogators which involved physical assault or threats of violence against the prisoner were less frequently rated by the coders as "effective" or "partially effective" than were all "non-coercive" tactics. Tactics which were judged as producing serious debilitation and those involving "self-inflicted pain" (e.g., protracted, forced standing) (6, 7), however, were rated "effective" more frequently than were "non-coercive" tactics. These differences were all tested by analyses of variance and t-tests. Each exceeded the .01 level of confidence. The negative association of cooperativeness and physical coercion may, of course, be due as much to violence as a response of the interrogator to the uncooperativeness of the prisoner as a cause of that uncooperativeness.

is believed, can be understood in terms of simple and basic social-psychological principles. In the face of manipulations of the situation open to the interrogator, silence on the part of the prisoner is believed inconsistent with prerequisites for action which the prisoner experiences; namely, behavior in accordance with a consistent, learned (indeed, "over-learned") role and an esteemed self-image. The possible application of these hypotheses to a few illustrative social-psychological stresses in interrogation comprises the discussion which follows.

Some cautions are in order regarding the orientation of this discussion. The central model it poses is that of the successful exploitation of a prisoner who is highly motivated to resist, the exploitation taking place without the employment of physical interventions or the overt threat of such intervention by the interrogator.

In orienting this paper to the effectiveness of interrogation, the writer does not wish to convey an exaggerated impression of its potency. Most Air Force repatriates, on the contrary, claim considerable success in evading, deceiving, and delaying their interrogators. Further, over two-thirds of the repatriates, in anonymous replies to a mail questionnaire, expressed the opinion that such information as the Communists did elicit was such as to have little effect, if any, on military operations.

It is also important to add that the more immediate effects of coercion, as well as rational or rationalistic decisions to comply, may indeed play a much more important role in given cases of compliance than the kinds of effects discussed here. The writer (6, 7) has discussed some effects of coercive interrogation practices in papers based on the Air Force study of its personnel captured during the Korean War. Farber, Harlow and West (14) have also discussed effects of coercion on Air Force prisoners. A general description of the Air Force study is contained in Senate testimony (45, p. 141 ff.), and in West (49).

#### INTERACTION IN INTERROGATION

##### *Silence as a Form of Interaction*

One general set of difficulties which prisoners of war encounter in attempting to adhere to the "name, rank, number, only" rule follows from the fact that "refusing to interact" with someone is a form of interaction. Silence is a form of interaction which has certain almost automatic and specific meanings to the participants in the situation (cf. 17, 47). Emotional reactions associated with these meanings are intense—probably more intense than those associated with most of the verbal exchanges which initiate interrogation situations.

The automatic meanings are incomplete, however. Where the prisoner limits



his interactions to refusals to talk, he relinquishes to the interrogator the opportunities for fixing further the meaning of the prisoner's behavior.

A common interrogation trick to induce a reluctant informant to begin talking is the faked "silent confirmation." The interrogator puts questions incorporating information he already knows from other sources. Thus, he may ask rapidly, looking up very briefly after each question: "You are from the 351st, right? You are based in Okinawa, is that right?" Without giving the prisoner a chance to reply, the interrogator indicates by a fleeting gesture that he has interpreted the prisoner as giving a confirming sign, and quickly goes on to another similar question. The prisoner has the alternative of volunteering to correct the apparent "misinterpretation" by the interrogator or letting matters stand. Indeed, the prisoner may readily believe that he did give a betraying sign involuntarily. Through this device, the interrogator establishes the role of the prisoner in the situation as a "cooperative" one, and the latter must assume initiative to force a change in the definition.

In ordinary social interaction, gestures, countenance, grunts, etc., are continuously employed for confirming to the other that one understands and agrees with what he is saying. Short symbols for contradicting, while not nearly as frequently employed, are also part of the basic interactional repertoire. More special and less used are ways of communicating: "I am not going to tell you whether what you say is true or not." While well-rehearsed words and gestures exist for conveying this meaning—for example, the words "ain't saying," compressed lips—these tend to be used in situations in which they also convey some other special emotional connotation, such as hostility, coyness, arrogance, and guilt. These are connotations that the prisoner usually does not wish to convey in the interrogation. Much of the initial verbal interaction between uncooperative prisoners and their interrogator involves the prisoner attempting to counter the latter's professed interpretation of the prisoner's attitude as manifestly hostile and supercilious.

An interrogator using the "silent confirmation" trick can also choose a strategic question as the point when he takes note of a refusal to answer, with the implication that of all the questions asked, it is only this one regarding which the prisoner is defensive. Thus, after using the "silent confirmation" gambit for a series of questions against an officer who was remaining mute, one interrogator is reported as shouting suddenly somewhat as follows:

"Ah, so you refuse to admit that you flew on the 29th. That is because you are trying to hide from me your criminal activity in dropping germ bombs, isn't it? It is useless for you to try to hide your crimes from me."

### *Silence Interpreted as Incriminating*

In this illustration of a use of the "faked silent confirmation," the tactic was combined with the attempted exploitation of an even more obvious

vulnerability of the prisoner who is refusing to answer—the ability of the interrogator to attach an incriminating interpretation to the prisoner's standing mute.

It is an easy matter for the interrogator to make the prisoner feel that his persistence in refusing to answer questions is interpreted as meaning that he has something important to hide. Explicitly or implicitly, the prisoner feels that he is threatened with prolongation and intensification of the interrogation unless he can convince the interrogator that he possesses nothing vital. His willingness to endure the consequences of persisting in refusing to answer tends to reinforce the original interpretation that he is protecting something of great consequence.

The situation is very similar to the invocation of the Fifth Amendment plea against self-incrimination in domestic situations. Despite it being within the "rights" of the individual to decline to answer, the use of the right is taken as implying that there is indeed something significant and incriminating which the witness desires to withhold. The effect here too is self-reinforcing in that the willingness of the individual to accept the opprobrium involved in declining adds weight to the original interpretation that he has something to hide. By continuing to ask questions which they are certain the witness will decline to answer, particularly questions involving allegations of the most outrageous behavior on the part of the witness, investigators cumulate the effects of this opprobrium.

### *"Zeroing-in"*

Like the "name, rank, number, only" rule, the Fifth Amendment refusal has to be used in a blanket fashion to prevent the questioner from "zeroing-in" on the sensitive areas. When more and more specific questions are asked, answering certain questions while refusing to answer others can become hardly different in effect from answering all: e.g.: Q. "Do you know John Jones?" A. "No." Q. "James Smith?" A. "No." Q. "Robert Brown?" A. "I refuse to answer." Similarly, a willingness of a prisoner to discuss the navigational equipment of his aircraft but not its electronic countermeasures, he feels, is open to interpretation by his interrogator that he knows something important regarding the latter which he is reluctant to disclose.

The use of accusations of crimes to reinforce this source of stress against refusing to answer has not been limited to "confession"-elicitation efforts nor to Communist practice. It was also a frequent tactic among World War II interrogators, both Allied and Axis, who commonly would tell captured men that they must describe fully their background to prove that they were ordinary soldiers or airmen rather than spies ("... who we know has been parachuted-in in this vicinity") (7, 26, 27, 40, 46). Readers of detective

stories are doubtless familiar with the inspector who accuses the innocent, but reluctant witness, solely to pressure him to talk.

### *The Effort of Refusals*

Refusing to reply to questions evokes another stress, at least in many. In everyday situations, it is taken for granted that questions asked will be answered if they are "civil questions," and, as frequently as not, even if they are "uncivil" ones. Many find that the ingrained pattern of "civility" (11, 22, 43) makes it difficult for them to decline outright to answer a question. It is not that they cannot decline, but merely that the refusal requires continuous effort. The effects of both habit and suggestion make giving some answer the "line of least resistance." (Cf. 14, p. 277.) Some former POWs, with their reserves of strength already depleted by the conditions of their captivity, say that they found themselves worn down by the continuous effort involved in controlling the inclination to answer questions.

The tendency of the great majority of prisoners in the early stage of their interrogations was to attempt to avoid these stresses by giving answers such as "I don't know" or "I can't remember" instead. The "don't know" type of response was used more than twice as frequently as outright refusals, according to the tabulations we were able to make of repatriates' accounts of their behavior in intelligence interrogations. Also, many more returnees recommend "don't know" responses as an interrogation tactic than recommend "refusals."

Obviously, utilization of the "don't know" response is inconsistent with the "name, rank, number, only" rule; since there are so many items of information beyond "name, rank, number"—many of them at least of some intelligence significance—regarding which the prisoner cannot pretend to be ignorant. There were frequent instances of POWs claiming that they would say "I don't remember," rather than to refuse to answer outright, even in the cases of information the interrogator knew they possessed. "Don't know's" are preferred seemingly as a social fiction—as word magic to avoid the explicit challenge and opposition of wills inherent in silence or a blunt refusal.

### *Effects of Frustration*

Communist interrogators would meet professions of ignorance by a prisoner with violent accusations that this was a lie—the prisoner "did know" the answer. When the POW would say, "I don't know," the interrogator would typically shout (or even scream): "You lie! You cheat! You are dishonest! You must know! You must answer!" etc. What distressed the POWs even more was the interrogator's practice of spending hours demanding answers to question after question when there was not the remotest possibility that his victim possessed any knowledge whatsoever of the subject. For example, a

low-ranking airman might be asked esoteric questions about aircraft engineering, atomic weapons, or regarding details of the lives of high political or military figures. An effect of this tactic became apparent to the prisoner when he experienced what one described as: "... the tremendous feeling of relief you get when he finally asks you something you can answer." As another said:

"I know it seems strange now, but I was positively grateful to them when they switched to a topic I knew something about."

The prisoners who described this reaction were all describing situations in which there was explicit and intense coercion. These were situations in which the prisoner was punished for his "don't know" responses, typically by being forced to stand at attention until he had given some positive reply. The writer believes, however, that the same effect occurs even in the overtly non-coercive situation, although the prisoner may be less aware of the fact that it is occurring, and less prone to talk about it after his return. (Cf. 44.)

The tactic of asking unanswerable questions can be classed with a large number of other manipulations of the prisoner's environment which cumulate frustration and attempt to make behavior in accordance with the interrogator's purposes almost the sole kind of effective behavior in which the prisoner can engage. In this way, success in satisfying the interrogator may become not only an escape from frustration but a source of positive gratification (6, pp. 6-12; 7, p. 623). Manipulating the prisoner in this way can be of great importance to the interrogation process; in part, because it is an objective of comprehensive military interrogations that the prisoner actively strive to grasp the interrogator's needs and anticipate his demands.

### *Manipulations of the Prisoner's Role*

In the discussion thus far, illustrations have been given of the "pressures" on the prisoner to interact with the interrogator in order to preclude definitions of himself and his role which he regards as highly disadvantageous. That the prisoner needs to behave in accordance with a coherent role at all forms the more basic source of his vulnerability to manipulations by the interrogator. Both overtly and covertly, delimited role definitions, along with broader definitions of the situation, are necessary in interrogations as in all other behavioral situations, if for no other reason than because of the extreme effort which would be involved in the constant improvisation of responses to each successive demand presented by the situation. Experiments, such as those by Ausubel, Schiff, and Goldman (1, p. 537) and Beier (4), have found improvisation of responses particularly difficult in situations which arouse anxiety. Basowitz, *et al.* (2) found anxiety associated with stereotypical and "over-

learned" responses. Stereotypy of response also was found by Jones (28) to be associated with frustrating situations.

Much of the effectiveness of interrogation rests upon the difficulty the prisoner experiences in his attempt to play a consistent role in a manipulated and stressful situation. Frequently, but not invariably, the interrogator seeks to induce the prisoner to play a role involving an overt display of cooperativeness. Whatever the role taken by the prisoner, however, the interrogator can do various things to make replying to his questions appear necessary to the prisoner in his attempt to behave consistently. The interrogator attempts to force a constriction of the prisoner's role so as to limit the numbers and kinds of defenses which the latter can employ, or which will even occur to him.

With respect to one important "dimension" of the role taken, "overt cooperativeness or uncooperativeness," it was found that, while Air Force Korean War prisoners usually report taking very different attitudes in successive interrogations, they almost always report that they persisted in the same attitude throughout any given interrogation.

These observations are consistent with Goffman's (22, pp. 9-11) description of the essential, stable symmetry in the formative processes of social interaction:

"The individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretenses of being other things. As the interaction among the participants progresses, additions and modifications in this initial informational state will of course occur, but it is essential that these . . . be related without contradiction to, and even built up from, the initial positions of the several participants . . ." (p. 10).

### *Shielding the "Self"*

One function of the role assumed by the prisoner is believed to be that of a shield for more covert aspects of the personality. Because of what those captured in the Korean War had heard about "being broken," "brainwashing" and the like, there was a particularly strong need for them to reassure themselves that the interrogator was not causing them to lose control of themselves—that they were not being "changed" or deprived of their "will" (5).

A frequent type of explanation in repatriates' reports for complying in interrogations, as well as when confronted with other demands, is:

"I decided to give in while I still had my wits about me and could control what they got out of me, rather than waiting until they had broken me completely."

This kind of remark has been interpreted both as describing a rational act and as a guilt-dispelling rationalization for premature yielding (15, p. 39; 48, p. 244). It may reflect other motives, however—motives beyond evading pressure and full compliance in the situation, and evading guilt after it.

Yielding in this way in interrogations can be one of a class of behaviors which can help the subject reassure himself that he is indeed in control of the

situation and, more important, in control of himself. In somewhat more dynamic terms, such responses play a role in reassuring the subject that he is indeed himself. The need to reassure oneself in this manner, the writer believes, is a pervasive factor in much of the compliance that takes place in interrogation situations.

Interviews after the event can tap this effect only with difficulty, because the values in psychological economics of compliance and compulsion are so different during and after the event. On his return home, and even earlier, the prisoner can justify compliance to himself and to others by his having been "forced to" comply, if the more obvious forms of coercion have been used against him. During the interrogation itself, however, being "forced to" do something can be a greater blow to self-esteem than that stemming from the transgression of a norm of resistance. Not only can the shame or guilt of defeat in the encounter with the interrogator be involved, but also the more fundamental injunction to protect one's self-autonomy or "will." This is particularly true in those cases where the manipulations of the prisoner have been of a more subtle kind, and the yielding prisoner has not struck a simple, conscious bargain of trading information in exchange for relief from coercion.

Even after their return, however, many ex-prisoners are reluctant to employ the defense of coercion and almost all of them shun the defense of "loss of self-control" to excuse or mitigate compliance with enemy demands. This is true even where it appears obvious to an independent observer that there would be a legitimate basis for these defenses.<sup>7</sup> Their insistence that their behavior was based on a rational choice, the writer feels, indicates that this psychological defense may continue to operate after the event, even in the face of inconsistent pressures upon the individual to exculpate himself.

A simple defense against threats to the self from the anticipation of being "forced to comply" is, of course, to comply "deliberately" or "voluntarily." "Self-defeating" behavior of this kind in interrogation has been discussed by Biderman (6, pp. 16-18), Federn (15, p. 39), and Weissberg (48, p. 244). Piers (36) presents a general analysis of self-defeating behavior as a defense.

<sup>7</sup> About one-third of the surviving Air Force prisoners had received official instructions prior to capture which authorized conversation beyond "name, rank, number," if necessary to escape duress. These instructions appear to have had an effect on the explanations given by returnees for yielding information in interrogations. The effect was not to facilitate the use of coercion as a defense for having yielded, however. As compared with other returnees, those who had received such instructions made much more frequent use of rationalistic explanations for divulging information (e.g., ". . . the enemy possessed the information already," ". . . it was available in *Stars and Stripes*") and employed the justification of coercion less frequently. (Differences between relative frequencies of mention are significant at .01 level or greater [t-test].) Both instructed and uninstructed men gave rationalistic explanations much more frequently than coercion as an explanation or defense of yielding, however.



To the extent that the foregoing interpretation holds, the more intensely motivated the prisoner is to resist, the more intense is the pressure toward early compliance from such anxieties; for the greater is the threat to self-esteem which is involved in contemplating the possibility of being "forced to" comply (6, pp. 16-18). Fortunately for resistance, this is not the sole determinant of the outcome of interrogation encounters.

The interrogator also exploits more superficial efforts of the POW to protect his self-esteem. The interrogator is aided by the necessity the prisoner experiences for confining the actions he takes to this end largely to those consistent with the "overt role" he is assuming in the situation. A very common and simple example is the interrogator allowing the "resistant" prisoner to "prove" that the information he has given is not really important. One way the "resistant" prisoner can prove this is to give freely even more significant information.

The interrogator can encourage a prisoner who is attempting a role involving feigned cooperativeness by pretending temporarily to accept falsehoods. Former POWs report their interrogators frequently would seem to accept ridiculous statements. Such instances occurred frequently in a context in which the interrogator appeared to be attempting to commit the prisoner to playing the cooperative kind of role.

The interrogation situation also has those elements of almost all social interaction which involve an implicit agreement among the participants that they will only have to reveal a small segment of their personalities, and this not necessarily a "true" one. Roles allow us to conceal from others aspects of ourselves that are "shameful," either in themselves or because of more specific inappropriateness to the professed social relationship at the time (cf. 11, 21, 22, 43). In artful, intensive interrogation, the interrogator tries to make a part of this bargain that the prisoner give the information desired. Since he possesses controls of the situation which the prisoner accepts as legitimate, and a role permitting a considerable degree of uncivility, he can impugn and reject the prisoner's attempt to play roles which are inconsistent with the purposes of the interrogation. At the same time, he can suggest and accept ways in which the prisoner can indeed behave so as not to reveal aspects of his "self" that he has a need to conceal either from himself or his interrogator, or that must be concealed to maintain the social consistency of the stereotypical roles open to him. Much of his power to channel the role taken by the prisoner consists of the freedom his own role confers for departures from the ordinary reciprocities of interaction, as well as his experience and training in the "art" of doing so. By failing to reciprocate the prisoner's effort to play out aspects of his role, he creates for the latter what Goffman (20, p. 221) has called "ritually unsatisfactory states." The problems this creates for the

prisoner involve both the maintenance of an integrated pattern of overt action and the management of his subjective responses to the event. This may be illustrated by the alternative ways in which prisoners attempt to deal with their hostility to the interrogator.

### *Hostility*

A frequent response of the interrogator to the assumption of an overtly hostile role by the prisoner involves failing to reciprocate the hostile expressions. In Korea, reports of returnees indicate this occurred in approximately half of the situations in which a prisoner assumed an overtly hostile role. Since much of the adaptive repertoire to situations which provoke overt hostility involves techniques for calling forth hostility in the other, this tactic again presents the prisoner with problems of improvising responses—of being unable to behave in accordance with a well-learned role. From a psychological standpoint, the tactic makes it difficult for the prisoner to “act out” his hostility against the interrogator, to “integrate his response.”

Referring to such situations, many Korean War returnees have made comments like the following:

“No matter how I tried, I could not make the ——— angry. God, if only I could have made him hit me. But he just sat there saying: ‘You don’t have the correct attitude. You must understand your situation. You will realize we are trying to help you. You must cooperate.’ And all that sort of thing over and over and over again.”

Regardless of whether or not the interrogator chose to reciprocate a prisoner’s attempt to play the hostile role, the attempt was likely to generate frustration and the penning-up of hostility because of the limited ability of the POW to commit hostile acts against his interrogator.

The problem of managing hostility may be no easier for the prisoner who feigns cooperativeness and it is complicated by the prisoner denying himself such opportunities as might exist for overt expressions of hostility. Analogous problems have been examined intensively in race relations, particularly with respect to the “meek adjustment” of Southern Negroes (38).

Just as the overtly hostile prisoner could find his interrogator feigning sociability and solicitude, the overtly cooperative one could encounter extremely hostile responses from his interrogator. The more he sought to “prove” his cooperativeness, the more his interrogator might denounce him for his deceitfulness, with even physical punishment added to the personal vituperation.

### *Deflected Hostility*

To the extent that the interrogator can dodge being a suitable target for the prisoner’s hostility, he may create potentialities for deflecting that hos-

tility to such other objects as suits his purpose. For the interrogator, there are two convenient directions for the deflection of the prisoner's hostility: (a) inward, for the enhancement of the prisoner's feelings of guilt and (b) outward, against the sources of social support of the prisoner's resistance.

Hinkle and Wolff (26) and Schein (41, pp. 23-24) have discussed general ways in which Communist captors deflect the hostilities of the prisoners. Certain other devices were specific to interrogation. Almost universal was pretending (or disclosing) that other prisoners had betrayed the subject by giving information about him or by giving information which he was endeavoring to conceal. Another device was to suggest to the prisoner that his commanders, sitting safely and comfortably behind desks, were demanding that he endure hardships (if not unspeakable tortures and ultimate death) to protect items of information which were trivial and meaningless, which the captor already knew, or which the same authorities were publishing in newspapers or incorporating in manuals that had been carried by the prisoner's aircraft into enemy territory.

### *Guilt*

The blocking of the expression of hostility is one of many factors in the interrogation situation tending toward the generation of feelings of guilt. The guilt experienced by the prisoner has preoccupied much of the psychological consideration of the problem of the regulation of prisoner behavior in accordance with the norms of his parent society. Hinkle and Wolff (26) and others (23, 24) have discussed the role of guilt feelings in destroying the ability of the prisoner to resist his captor.

## THE REGULATION OF BEHAVIOR

### *Rigid versus Flexible Injunctions*

Many who advocated the "name, rank, number, only" rule to govern soldiers' conduct in the event of enemy interrogation, as well as those who argued that the rule was "unrealistic," recognized that talk itself was as much of a danger as physical coercion. The basic point of issue between them was whether rigid or flexible injunctions to personnel would afford greater control of deviations from the ideal norm of "no aid to the enemy."

In this controversy, there was a reversal of the positions of the advocates of these polar policies with respect to the potency they attributed to the interrogator's control of the interaction process, depending upon whether they were discussing the interrogator's ability to compel some talk from the prisoner initially, or his ability to compel significant disclosures once the prisoner was talking. Advocates of the rigid rule stressed that the power position of the

interrogator in the interrogation prevented the prisoner from controlling or limiting his talk once he began talking. The prisoner could not hope to outwit, deceive, or evade the skilled interrogator, they maintained, and any policy which relied upon personnel doing so was futile or worse. They did not attribute the same omnipotence to the interrogator in forcing the prisoner to depart from the rule of silence in the first place, however. On the other hand, advocates of flexible instructions to personnel stressed the ability of the interrogator to compel the prisoner to talk, but generally they did not evaluate so highly his ability to ensure that the talk was accurate, significant or exhaustive. The prisoner, they believed, could control what he said so as to limit, or to avoid entirely, significant disclosures of information, particularly if he was trained "to evade" the interrogator (46).

The aspects of the prisoner's situation which have been discussed here open him to influence both with respect to initial departures from the rule of silence and to subsequent channeling of his conversation to significant disclosures. In addition, although this point cannot be elaborated in the present discussion, it is far more difficult for the interrogator to gain precisely those disclosures he seeks than it is for him to compel the prisoner to engage in some conversation. To this extent, the present discussion is more consistent with arguments that were offered for flexible, as opposed to rigid, injunctions to personnel.

Conclusions with respect to the interrogator's power and the prisoner's vulnerability do not resolve the entire controversy, however. It is not unusual in our culture for absolute injunctions against acts to be accepted despite the existence of widespread, if not universally inevitable, deviations of behavior from these injunctions. It remains open to question whether less rigid or more rigid norms better control the frequency and degree of deviations from ideal social values where the pressure toward such deviations is high. Thus, for example, from survey evidence like Kinsey's on the ubiquity of proscribed sex behavior, it cannot be inferred automatically that more permissive "official" norms would make for either more or fewer deviations from consensual ideals or from whatever social functions are fulfilled by such ideal behavior standards. There is also the question of the ultimate, ritual significance of the injunction despite the extent and degree of its non-observance.

The issue was put rather clearly by an Air Force officer who had made a false "germ warfare" confession which the Communists had used widely in their propaganda. Asked what he would do differently if he had to go through the same sort of experience again, the officer avowed that he was certain that he would behave in more or less the same way and, except for the possibility of succeeding next time in his attempt at suicide, the outcome, too, was likely to be the same. He made various suggestions on how one could be more successful in lying and stalling, but these, he believed, were merely ways of

deferring the inevitable outcome. Asked about the debate then current on the "name, rank, number, only" rule, however, this officer expressed firm support of instructing personnel to adhere to it. He added:

"It would have told me when I was doing wrong. It would have firmly established in my own mind which was right and which was wrong from the standpoint of what the government expected of me."

Another returnee said:

"I know I couldn't stick to it and nobody else can either. . . . But you have to have it so you know when you are doing wrong."

Other former POWs, including Maj. Gen. William F. Dean,<sup>8</sup> have made similar comments.

Examination of the prisoner's predicament in reconciling his behavior in interrogation to the official injunctions he has received may offer some clarification of pervasive problems of the relative effectiveness of rigid versus flexible norms as instruments of social control.

The discussion in the previous section of this paper, from only a slightly different perspective, has involved the same predicament of the prisoner: his need to achieve some consistency between the role demands of the "self" he comes to present to his interrogator, those which are involved in his own self-image, and those which are given by "official" or "back home" conceptions of interrogation. To the extent that the prisoner is unable to reconcile these sets of demands by action in the situation, he may reconcile them by experiencing feelings of guilt and by psychological defenses against these feelings (6, pp. 16-18). An alternative possibility is that no equilibrium is established and his behavior disintegrates.

### *Guilt and Rigid Injunctions*

The possibility of the latter type of outcome—the "breaking" of the prisoner—has been the preoccupation of much of the advocacy of rigid injunctions to govern conduct in the event of capture. Thus, one military psychiatrist, arguing for adherence to the "name, rank, number, only" rule, is quoted as saying:

"Talking is always the first step toward collaborating. Once a man starts talking, there is no escape from more talking. And the more he talks, the greater his guilt and anxiety become, and the less able he is to cope with the normal stresses of prison life. His whole personality tends to disintegrate. He knows he has done something wrong, and his conscience will not let him rest." (29, p. 148)

If this psychiatrist's opinions regarding guilt and anxiety are sound, however, the same argument may be made with at least equal force against the rule.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *U. S. News and World Report*, July 8, 1955, p. 34.

To evoke a chain of guilt and anxiety leading inevitably to "complete disintegration" of a prisoner who was firmly indoctrinated in the rule, the interrogator would merely have to induce any departure from the rule, regardless of how trivial and valueless to his purposes it might be. The same replies which would be regarded as inconsequential by a prisoner who was not committed to the injunction become guilt-provoking defeats for one who rigidly accepts it. Since, in experience, some departures from the "name, rank, number, only" rule are almost universal, the psychiatrist's proposal for seeing to it "... that the man was packed full of arguments as to why he must not talk" (29, p. 148) might hasten and intensify his disintegration, if this reasoning is accepted.

### *Guilt Feelings and Resistance*

Guilt feelings need not be disintegrative, however. They can be managed so that they support behavior in accordance with norms of resistance. It is, in fact, difficult to conceive of effective resistance without some mobilization of guilt feelings in support of it. Whether the guilt is of a degree consistent with its rational management, whether the individual has the degree of insight necessary for adequate assessment of inner realities, and the information and perspicacity necessary for adequate assessment of the outer realities, as well as the skill and persistence of the manipulative attempts against him, all may be expected to contribute to the outcome.

### *"The Breaking Point" Notion*

A "disintegrative" effect of trivial acquiescence does occur because of a fallacy of the self-confirming variety. This is the tendency to think of resistance and collaboration in absolute "either-or" terms. A specific and particularly incapacitating form of this general tendency is the notion of "the breaking point." This notion visualizes as the goal of the interrogator the "breaking" of the prisoner—bringing him to a point where he no longer has a capacity for any resistance whatsoever. In Korea, those who accepted rigid norms were apt to feel that they had been "broken," or, more frequently, were "on the verge of breaking," when they had yielded to any significant degree. A few did become rather thoroughly demoralized as a result. Most prisoners in Korea who were reduced to fairly abject states, however, came to realize that they were not "broken"—that they still possessed considerable resources for resistance. Some of the most dramatic examples of prisoner resistance in the face of intense duress were cases of recuperation after a period of serious yielding to interrogators (6).

A recognition of these facts presumably influenced the Defense Committee's



recommendation that personnel be trained for "successive lines of resistance" in interrogation (46, p. 18).

The terms "break" and "breaking point"—as in the proposition often asserted during the controversy on POW behavior: "Every man has his breaking point" (46)—are associated with whatever psycho-physiological meanings such terms may have in psychiatry. Quite obviously, there are whole ranges of "breaking points" and all manner of styles of "breaking," only some of which are consistent with the information-eliciting objectives of an interrogator (7; 10; 14, p. 280). Thus, psychotic states of a delusional kind or those involving the loss of the capacity for consciously integrated activity are obviously inconsistent with an interrogator's objectives.

One large class of abrupt shifts toward more cooperativeness in interrogation can be understood without confusion with the radical psycho-physiological changes popularly connoted by the term "break." This is a change in the role being played by the prisoner. When forced to depart in one respect from the consistent, integrated role he is attempting to play (either the overt role, or the covert role, or both), the prisoner may have to adopt an altogether different pattern of behavior. In the cases the writer has examined, however, such abrupt shifts in role are described as in the direction of greater overt uncooperativeness almost as frequently as in the direction of greater cooperativeness. From the perspective of the disintegration of a role, the switch in either direction can be considered equally as a "break." As was indicated earlier, shifts in the "overt cooperativeness" aspect of the prisoner's role are reported in the majority of instances as occurring from one situation to another, rather than during a given interrogation situation, however. As such, they conform better with interpretation as planned changes of tactics rather than as "breaks."

In a few instances, the change was indeed an abrupt one. Here, the person could have the feeling of some radical and compelling change occurring "within him" without awareness of the source of the need for such a complete shift in his behavior. From this standpoint, too, it would appear that the prisoner who regards any deviation from a rigid, non-cooperative role as "being broken" would be the one most likely to experience a "breaking point."

### *Personality Defenses and Social Controls*

The psychological defense mechanisms discussed in the present paper are ones which are necessary to protect the integration of the prisoner's personality, insofar as this integration involves internalized norms demanding resistance to the interrogator. They are necessary in view of the almost universal and seemingly inevitable departures from the ideal norms of resistance which the problems of interaction in interrogation can produce. In their absence,

psychological theory would lead us to expect either general personality disintegration, as the psychiatrist quoted above suggests, or a changed integration in which other norms and values are substituted for those underlying resistance.

From the practical military intelligence perspective—promoting resistance in order to deny military information to an enemy—the norms must be rigid enough to make yielding psychologically “painful” by making it difficult for psychological defenses against shame and guilt to operate. They must not be so rigid, however, as to preclude the operation of psychological defenses where guilt and shame threaten to be insupportable; i.e., where personality integration itself is threatened. For, in actuality, “disintegration” rarely occurs, but rather some pathological and reality-distorting defense comes into play to “save the day” when guilt feelings have cumulated excessively.

### *The “Code of Conduct”*

The present “Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces,” insofar as it relates to interrogation, has a similar rationale. A compromise of diverse opinions regarding the “name, rank, number, only” rule, it represents an attempt to reconcile the simple value principle of not aiding the enemy with the empirical complexities of prisoner-of-war situations. It attempts to do this by affirming absolute non-intercourse with the enemy as the ideal for prisoner behavior, while providing for eventualities in which behavior cannot accord with this ideal (39).

### *Limitations of Conventional Ideas of Duress*

As guides to these eventualities, current cultural conceptions of what constitute compelling influences on behavior are limited, ill-defined, and frequently erroneous. Thus, in judgments of the responsibility of prisoners for behavior contravening social codes, individuals are exonerated on evidence that they encountered duress of a kind or intensity which most other individuals resisted successfully. On the other hand, influences which none or almost none withstood are regarded as constituting no excuse, if indeed they are recognized as influences at all.

The following are illustrations from the Korean War experience. The threat of imminent death, which of all classes of duress has the highest status in law as an excuse for a delict (35), is not among the most effective weapons an interrogator has in gaining the compliance of his prisoner. Over half of the repatriated Air Force prisoners report that they were threatened with death in efforts to gain factual information from them (additional threats figured in “confession” extortion and other exploitation attempts) (7). According to the repatriates’ statements, only five per cent of these threats caused the prisoner to yield the information demanded. Most violent methods were

also less likely to compel compliance from Air Force prisoners than the kinds of non-violent manipulations which have been discussed in the present paper, judging from repatriates' accounts of their interrogations. Further, in law, which is matched somewhat by common conceptions, a threat must be one of "immediate and impending death or of serious and immediate bodily harm" in order to excuse an act on the grounds of coercion (35). Psychological theory regarding anxiety, as well as the testimony of former prisoners, indicates that threats which are indefinite with respect to the time and nature of the harm to be suffered are much more disorganizing in their effects and thus more likely to be productive of compliance with an interrogator. Many prisoners who report that they almost eagerly sought to "get it all over with" by saying: "Go ahead and shoot!" eventually tried to "get it all over with" by real or feigned compliance.

### *Lack of Innovation after Korea*

Although intensive examination was given to the sources of the effectiveness of interrogation practices in the discussions leading to the "Code," there resulted no great departure from the traditional emphases on physical duress and insanity as explanations of "involuntary" behavior. As in the past (18, 35), terms such as "mental coercion" and "psychological pressures" were much employed, but no acceptable explanation at the level of specific interrogation experiences could be given for highly motivated prisoners succumbing to such apparently feeble pressures as threats, insults, and deceptions.

The various theories of "brainwashing" which figured prominently in the debate, despite being burdened with large elements of non-scientific mysticism (3, 7), did provide some new recognitions of the force of such influences as prolonged social isolation, group pressures, debilitation, etc., (10, 14, 23, 24, 34, 35). "Brainwashing," as depicted, however, was applicable only to the more extreme forms of assault employed by the captor and the more extreme forms of aberrant behavior among the POWs. The Defense Committee found these depictions applicable to the experiences of only a very few prisoners (46, pp. 13-14). Legal commentaries found in them nothing calling for departures from the traditional legal tests of duress and insanity (35, 39). The theories further were oriented toward induced changes of ideological attitudes, manipulations which had rare and mostly minor effects on compliance in intelligence interrogations or other material forms of compliance with enemy demands (8, 45).

### *Duress and Internal and External Sanctions*

Limitations of the applicability of current coercion concepts in making legal and moral judgments are evidenced by the Defense Committee's state-

ment: "No case [of a Korean War prisoner] was brought for court-martial action in which there was evidence of duress, brainwashing, or any other type of coercion" (46, p. 29).<sup>9</sup> Only ten of the approximately 4,000 Americans repatriated after the Korean War were indeed convicted of offenses involving aid to the enemy (35). Since some coercion is likely to be experienced by every prisoner of war, the effectiveness of legal punishment in controlling behavior is dependent upon the feasibility of distinctions between the force of different classes and degrees of influence. Adequate bases for such distinctions apparently did not exist, so that evidence of any "coercion," according to the official statement, ruled out punishment.

While the individual prisoner himself doubtless had more accurate knowledge of what he encountered than did others who judged him, his notions of what constituted duress, coercion and excuse reflect much the same limited cultural conceptions. Judgments of juridical guilt and subjective feelings of personal guilt are not congruent, but social control measures like the "Code of Conduct" aim to make them more so. From the standpoint of social controls acting to make behavior accord with ideal standards, private judgments by individuals of their own behavior are even more important than public judgments, particularly in situations where the individual is isolated and his behavior is not open to public surveillance. Current conceptions and policies indicate to the prisoner that he may be forced to yield, but mislead him with respect to the relative potency of the various influences which confront him and with respect to the judgments he makes of his own behavior relative to that of other men. To the extent this is true, prisoners' guilt feelings arising from deviations from norms can be expected to produce disorganized responses and irrational defenses, rather than conformity with ideal standards.

The principle of social control involved here is as old as the ancient Canon Law dictum: ". . . A Superior cannot impose an obligation upon a whole community when its observance is beyond the ordinary powers of the members of the community" (31, p. 89). Where such an obligation is imposed, punishments imposed by authority tend to be irrational and arbitrary, or, as in the post-Korea cases, are ruled out altogether by the impossibility of making distinctions regarding responsibility. Similarly, internal punishment from feelings of guilt under such circumstances becomes functionless. With adequate understanding of what is and what is not "within the ordinary powers of the members of a community," however, distinctions become possible on the basis of which external and internal punishments can operate to control behavior.

<sup>9</sup> Court-martial actions were not brought against any of the Air Force repatriates (46). Only one Army ex-prisoner was convicted of a count of giving intelligence information to the enemy (35, p. 749).

The interpretations in the present paper of the social-psychological needs compelling conversation by the prisoner are based upon what have become almost axiomatic propositions of social psychology, the requirements for the maintenance of the self and a viable, complementary role in social interaction. If the present paper contributes to social-psychological knowledge, it does so by furnishing additional illustrations of the soundness of the ground on which the social psychologist stands.

The "Code" and the nature of the debate leading to it indicate, however, that the axioms of social psychology do not rival common cultural conceptions or the hypotheses of psycho-physiology in their influence on important policy. A corresponding unawareness on the part of many prisoners of social-psychological forces determining their behavior had the disabling effects on their behavior which have been illustrated here.

As in many life situations, and perhaps in the most important ones, some of the requirements of action in interrogation are inconsistent with value principles strongly affirmed by the society and the actor himself. Where physical or physiological necessities are recognized as keeping behavior from being completely consistent with the ideal, the actor is not incapacitated by feelings of guilt and frustration. Nor is he regarded by others and by himself as having abandoned the values appropriate to the situation; and he can continue to pursue them, as the Defense Department's "Code of Conduct" demands (46), ". . . to the utmost of his ability." With more adequate and widespread understanding regarding the social-psychological limits to what is possible in behavior, the failure of action to accord completely with ideal principles may lead less often to incapacitating guilt or the abandonment of value principles in action.

#### SUMMARY

Some social-psychological aspects of the situation of a prisoner confronting enemy interrogation are interpreted as accounting in part for the observation in recent wars that almost all prisoners converse with interrogators, despite rigid orders to the contrary. The interpretations are based primarily on an analysis of the interrogation experience of 235 Air Force personnel returned from captivity in China and North Korea, with special reliance on a content analysis of 203 interviews with cases repatriated at the close of the Korean War. Aspects of interrogation are selected for discussion which were not peculiar to the Korean War experience, however.

All cases studied who had been interrogated other than perfunctorily reported conversing with interrogators beyond "name, rank, and number, only." Behavior was more frequently inconsistent with the "name, rank, number, only" rule in situations in which the ex-prisoner reported he was not subjected

to overt threats or violence than in situations in which such coercion was reported.

From the universality of conversation, despite norms and injunctions to the contrary, it was inferred that silence is inconsistent with requirements for action in interrogation situations. Two classes of such needs are illustrated—the need to behave in accordance with a consistent, learned role and in accordance with an esteemed self-image.

Silence is a form of interaction that conveys intense emotional meanings in most social situations. These usual meanings and the conventional reactions to them are inconsistent with the special role the prisoner wishes to play in interrogation. Silence is also an ambiguous response. The interrogator is free to “interpret” the significance of a prisoner’s silence. Only by departing from his refusal to converse with the interrogator can the prisoner preclude definitions of himself or his role which he regards as highly disadvantageous. This is illustrated by such interrogator tactics as interpreting silence as evidence of guilt of crime, as a confirmation of information, or as a manifestation of hostility, arrogance or of some other inappropriate “attitude” of the prisoner.

More fundamental than the desire of the prisoner to avoid disadvantageous definitions of his role in the situation is the simple need to behave in accordance with some one consistent and well-rehearsed role. This is evidenced by the reports by prisoners that they tended to persist in displaying the same attitude throughout any given situation, although most took different attitudes in successive interrogations.

The need for behaving consistently in accordance with an “over-learned” role is particularly great in interrogation because the ability to improvise responses is restricted by situational stress. As departures from highly trained response patterns, the prisoner’s refusals to answer and his reactions to his refusals require great effort and are frustrating.

Functions of the role taken in the interrogation include shielding more covert aspects of the personality and reassuring the prisoner that he is in control of the situation and in control of himself; both being interpreted as necessary for the protection of basic self-identity. “Self-defeating” behavior helps provide such reassurances to the prisoner who feels he may be forced to comply. The interrogator tries to make the divulgence of information the price of avoiding damaging self-revelations and the breakdown of role consistency. The tactics of interrogators for interfering with prisoners’ role-playing attempts are illustrated by the interrogator failing to reciprocate a prisoner’s hostile expressions, or responding with apparent hostility to the overtly cooperative prisoner.

Defenses against feelings of guilt experienced in interrogation can undermine the prisoner’s resistance. Rigid acceptance of the norm of absolute



non-intercourse in interrogation and overtly hostile roles can create particularly intensive problems of managing guilt by making even trivial acts of compliance sources of strong feelings of defeat and guilt. Guilt feelings also are prerequisites for resistance, however. They can operate to support resistance when they are of an intensity which can be rationally managed and where the prisoner can assess rationally which aspects of his situation are compelling and which non-compelling.

The failure of the prisoner to recognize the sources of the compulsion he experiences in interrogation intensifies their effects, particularly the disabling effects of guilt reactions. Current cultural conceptions, which shape the prisoner's judgments of his behavior, view only physical duress and "insanity" as excusing departures from norms like those demanding that the prisoner resist the enemy. Although the influences compelling conversations with interrogators discussed in the present paper appear of at least equal force in influencing behavior, they do not have recognition in law or social policy.

The "Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces" recognizes that the prisoner may not be able to adhere to the norm of absolute non-intercourse in interrogation, and the importance of providing for this eventuality. For the operation of both internal and external sanctions consistent with the closest approach to the norms of resistance, however, more accurate understandings of the compelling character of social-psychological needs are required than were developed in the discussions leading to the "Code."

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